

Kentucky State Parks - Quick Fact Sheet

Who We Are

The Kentucky State Park System comprises 52 parks spread throughout the Commonwealth. We operate 17 resorts with lodges, the most of any state park system in the nation. Our resorts offer a full range of recreational activities, complemented by comfortable accommodations. We also manage 12 historic sites designed to preserve and interpret our state's fascinating history. Our recreational parks range from rural, lakeside retreats to active, urban parks. Our parks embrace 11 museums or shrines. The department operates dining rooms in each resort, plus three cafeterias in Frankfort.

What We Offer

The recreational possibilities in Kentucky parks are endless. For summer fun, we operate more swimming pools than any other state. We maintain more than a dozen golf courses, including the Signature Series of six championship courses, most of them new and ready to offer challenging play. One of our parks – Kenlake – boasts an indoor tennis center, while two parks – Lake Cumberland and Lake Barkley – feature indoor pools. Thirty hiking trails criss-cross the park system. Horseback riding, miniature golf, and bicycle rentals are available at several parks.

Not all of our facilities are geared toward the vacationer. Kentucky parks attract group business, especially during the off-season. All resorts have meeting rooms and offer teambuilding activity opportunities led by trained recreational staff. Modern conference centers were completed recently at General Butler and Dale Hollow Lake state resorts.

Lovers of history flock to the John James Audubon museum in Henderson, where a priceless collection of work by the famed 19th-century ornithologist and artist is on display. Kentucky's pioneer past is reflected in reconstructed forts at Harrodsburg and Boonesborough.

Where We've Been

The Kentucky State Park system was "born" in 1924. It was then that the General Assembly passed legislation allocated funds and charged state geologist Willard Rouse Jillson with establishing a park system. Within a few years, several parks were open to the public, including Pine Mountain and Natural Bridge. Over the ensuing years, the park system grew, especially during the Depression era, when the Works Progress Administration undertook ambitious public works projects. The modern day park system, with its network of modern resort lodges, evolved in the 1950s and '60s.

Where We're Going

As an agency of the Commerce Cabinet, the Department of Parks is a catalyst for economic growth. Under the leadership of Governor Ernie Fletcher and Commerce Secretary George Ward, the department has five priorities. They are as follows:

1. To protect the natural environment.
2. To provide total guest satisfaction.
3. To enhance the professional development of employees.
4. To maintain our facilities.
5. To reach financial self-sufficiency.

